

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 8696

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN NATIONALIST PARTY

REF: DAMASCUS 8390

1. IN DECEMBER 20 MEETING, GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH ELIAS DESCRIBED TO AMBASSADOR RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE SYRIAN NATIONALIST PARTY (PARTI POPULAIRE SYRIEN-PPS).

2. ELIAS SAID THAT THE PARTY WAS STILL OFFICIALLY BANNED IN SYRIA BUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS TURNING A BLIND EYE TO ITS ACTIVITIES. THIS IS BOTH BECAUSE THE RULING BAATH PARTY PERCEIVES NO THREAT TO ITSELF IN PPS ACTIVITIES AND BECAUSE SARG IS GRATEFUL FOR SUPPORT THE PPS RENDERED IT IN THE LEBANESE CAMPAIGN. PARTY LEADER ABDULLAH SAADAH IS ABLE TO TRAVEL TO DAMASCUS FREELY AND LONG BANNED PARTY OFFICIAL ISAM MAYAYRI RECEIVED MARKED INDICATIONS OF SYRIAN ESTEEM ON HIS VISIT HERE (REFTEL).

3. FURTHERMORE, ELIAS COMMENTED, OF ALL FACTIONS OPERATING IN LEBANON, NONE HAD SHOWN ITSELF MORE EFFECTIVELY AND PER-
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SISTENTLY ANTI-COMMUNIST THAN THE PPS. PRESIDENT ASAD, WHO, THE PATRIARCH CLAIMED, HAS LONG WORRIED ABOUT THE GROWTH OF COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN LEBANON, PARTICULARLY APPRECIATED THE ANTI-COMMUNIST STRENGTH OF THE PPS. (ELIAS RECALLED A 1972 CONVERSATION IN WHICH HE HAD PARTICIPATED BETWEEN ASAD AND FRANGIE IN WHICH ASAD WARNED FRANGIE AGAINST SPOILING THE

LEBANESE COMMUNITY PARTY.)

4. ANOTHER REASON, ELIAS SPECULATED, SARG FAVORS THE PPS IS THAT ASAD SEES IN IT A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR A FUTURE MOVE TOWARDS FEDERATION/CONFEDERATION IN THE AREA. THE PARTY HAS SUPPORTERS IN LEBANON, SYRIA AND JORDAN AND COULD BE A USEFUL INSTRUMENT FOR ASAD AND THE BAATH AT SUCH TIME AS IT IS DECIDED TO ESTABLISH CLOSER UNITY AMONG THOSE STATES PLUS ANY FUTURE PALESTINIAN STATE.

5. FINALLY, ELIAS NOTED, SYRIA'S ALAWITE COMMUNITY HAS LONG BEEN CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE PPS. EVEN ASAD'S WIFE'S FAMILY (MAKHLOUF) ARE KNOWN TO BE STAUNCH PARTY SUPPORTERS, AND TWO OF FORMER STRONGMAN SALAH JADID'S BROTHERS--GHASSAND AND FUAD--WERE PPS MEMBERS DURING THE 1950'S.
MURPHY

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